



## **Finding Quality Preschool**



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## Choosing a Preschool

Scientific research is proving what many parents have already known for years: when children go to high-quality preschools, they'll develop academic, physical, and social skills that will benefit them throughout school and for the rest of their lives.

That's why it's so important to choose the right preschool - one that encourages children to learn, explore, and interact both with teachers and other children.

When choosing a preschool for your child, look for one that will help your child learn at his/her own pace. But, remember, children learn through play, and preschool should be fun.

There should be one preschool teacher or assistant for every 8 to 10 children. A preschool center should have large and small group activities and free time for children to do activities on their own.

*Thank you to the Illinois Early Learning Project for their contribution to this brochure.*



# Tips on Choosing a Preschool

The following are some tips that might help when making your choice. Ask about these areas or visit the preschool to watch the teachers and children and look at the program (school).

## 1. Ask about the Program (School)

- Is there time for group and individual activities?
- Are children busy with activities much of the time? They should not have to sit and listen to the teacher for a long time.
- Is there time for teachers to read to children as a group and one-on-one each day?
- Do children play inside and outside everyday (weather permitting)?
- Is there a large play area where children can build things, run, and jump?
- Is there sand, wood chips, or rubber under the play structures (not grass or cement)?
- Is there plenty of shade in the outside play areas?
- Is the center licensed?
- Have there been any complaints or licensing violations?

## 2. Ask about the Teachers

- Are the children comfortable with the teachers?
- Are children busy with activities much of the time? Children get the most out of preschool when they're playing and learning as much as possible.
- Do teachers work with the children as a class, in small groups, **AND** one-on-one? They're all important.
- Do teachers listen to children and help meet their needs?
- Do teachers and children talk to each other with kind words and smiles?
- Do teachers get down on the floor and play with the children?

## 3. Look at the Classroom

- Do the classroom and outdoor play areas look safe and clean?
- Are there special areas for reading, playing, art, and group activities?
- Is the room warm and inviting? Is the children's work displayed at an eye level for 3- and 4-year-olds?
- Are there building blocks, toys, items for pretend play, art supplies, puzzles, and games?
- Is there a quiet place for reading, quiet games, and resting?
- Are the chairs, tables, and equipment child-sized?

## 4. Observe the Children

- Do most of the children seem happy and involved in activities?
- Do teachers or assistants supervise children at all times?
- Are the classroom rules fair and are teachers consistent in enforcing the rules with all children?
- Do teachers help misbehaving children learn how to act the next time, telling the child what behavior is expected?
- Do teachers use positive discipline words? "Remember to walk into our classroom" is better than "No running."
- Are children with disabilities and other special needs included and supported?

## 5. Find out if Parents are Encouraged to Participate

- Do teachers and parents share information about the child both at scheduled meetings and when parents are dropping off or picking up their children?
- Do teachers share written information and assessments on the child's development?
- Are parents encouraged to drop-in at any time throughout the day? It's better when parents are involved.
- Do parents help in the classroom by bringing in special activities, books, or songs?

## What Parents Can Do

Connect with the Preschool often:

- Check in with the teachers briefly each day
- Leave notes for the teachers about special needs for your child
- Plan a conference with the teacher every 2 to 3 months
- Share stories about your child's home activities
- Work with the preschool and its teachers to resolve any problems
- Drop by unexpectedly and observe the program, the teachers, and your child

# Finding Quality Preschool

## Where You Can Find Help

Need help finding **quality preschool**?  
Call these free numbers from anywhere  
in California:

California Child Care Resource  
and Referral Network  
**(800) 543-7793**

TrustLine  
**(800) 822-8490**

Child Care Connection  
**(800) 543-7793**



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*Dedicated to improving the lives of children  
during their first five years.*